

Who? What? Why?

Who is most likely to get breast cancer?

The risk of developing breast cancer increases with age, starting at about age 40. Women who have mothers or sisters with breast cancer are at higher risk. But most women who develop breast cancer have no risk factors. That's why mammograms are so important.

What is a mammogram?

Think of it as an x-ray of the breast. Two plates hold the breast in place and flatten it, so that the x-rays can pass through. It can find a tumor this small: ●

Why have a mammogram?

Mammograms can find a tumor years before you can. If the tumor is cancer, it is much better to find it early, while it is still in one spot. Approximately 95% of cancers found at an early stage are successfully treated. Early detection may also reduce the extent of surgery needed. For example, early stages of cancer can often be treated with a lumpectomy (removal of only the lump and surrounding tissue) instead of a mastectomy (removal of the entire breast).

Below are some reasons women give for not having a mammogram.

“The radiation is dangerous.”

With today's machines, the level of radiation is very low. Studies have shown that these levels are not harmful. It can be much more dangerous to your health not to have a mammogram.

“I’m not sure if my insurance will cover it.”

- If you have health insurance: health insurers must pay for mammograms for women 40 and older and, in some cases, for women under 40. Check with your health insurance provider.
- If you receive Medicare: Medicare will pay most of the cost of your mammogram every year. You will be responsible for 20% of the cost, but it will not be subject to your annual deductible.
- If you receive Medicaid: Mammograms are covered in the Medicaid program.
- In every county of New York State, there are special screening programs that offer low/no-cost mammograms. For more information, call the Cancer Information Service at 1-800-4CANCER

“I’m afraid that they’ll find something.”

Most lumps are not cancer. But remember:

- It is always better if cancer is found EARLY! The sooner it is found and treated, the better your chances of living ... and of keeping the breast.
- Early breast cancer can often be treated by removing the lump or a portion of the breast (lumpectomy) rather than the whole breast (mastectomy).
- If mastectomy is necessary, there are ways to build, or reconstruct, a new breast.

“I’m afraid a mammogram will hurt.”

Most women find it slightly uncomfortable; a few find it painful. But it lasts for less than a minute. If your breasts get tender before your period, try having your mammogram during the two weeks after your period. Also, some women find that avoiding caffeine for a few days before a mammogram helps.

“I’m too old for a mammogram.”

You're never too old for a mammogram. Remember, your chances of having breast cancer increase with age. If you do have breast cancer, early detection and treatment could add many more happy and healthy years to your life.

“I’m not sure where to go for a mammogram.”

All mammography facilities must meet quality standards set by the federal government. However, some mammography centers have more experience than others. If you have a doctor, ask him or her to pick a center, and ask why this center was chosen. You can also call the Cancer Information Service at 1-800-4CANCER for referral to a mammography center near you. Or you can find mammography centers listed by location in New York State on the New York State Department of Health web page at: www.health.state.ny.us/nysdohconsumer/cancer/mammo/county.htm

“My doctor hasn’t mentioned mammograms.”

Even if your doctor hasn't mentioned mammograms, don't hesitate to bring the subject up at your next visit. Women need to know when to schedule their mammograms and other screening tests, and your doctor is one of your best sources of information.

If you don't have health insurance, or if your insurance doesn't cover mammograms or, if you cannot afford to pay the deductible required by your health insurance, contact the Healthy Women Partnership in your area to see if you qualify for free or low-cost mammograms. To find the Healthy Women Partnership nearest you, go to: www.health.state.ny.us. Click on “Info for Consumers,” then click on “Cancer Services.”

But are they
Good Reasons?

Aren't You Worth It?

Don't be afraid to take your health into your own hands. Isn't your life worth it? For more information, call the Cancer Information Service at 1-800-4CANCER or contact your local Healthy Women Partnership.



State of New York - George E. Pataki, Governor

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Department of Health - Antonia C. Novello, M.D., M.P.H., Dr.P.H., Commissioner

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Mammograms Help Save Lives

How do you find breast cancer early?

- During your routine medical checkup, ask your doctor for a breast exam.
- Have your first mammogram by the age of 40 (or earlier if your doctor says so).
- If you're 40 or older, have a mammogram every year.

Over 95% of early breast cancers can be cured.

Do you think that mammograms are... painful? ... dangerous? ...expensive?

Have you not had a mammogram because... you are afraid of what it might find?

...your doctor hasn't told you to have one? ...you think it will hurt?

If you answered "yes" to any of these questions, read on. This pamphlet could save your life.

Breast cancer is one of the most serious health threats women face today.

But over 95% of early breast cancers can be cured.